

Stewart Limpus (PhD Soc./Anth.)

Neo-Pagan identity and ritual in a modern Australian context

Significant research has been conducted around Neo-Paganism in many western countries; however, little research has been done around how the Pagan religious identity is formed and managed within the modern context. Australia's relatively short history as a western nation, combined with its European majority population, has produced a deficit in deep historical roots from which symbols, mythology and practices can be drawn and used to generate Pagan identity. The main research question addressed here is: how do Neo-Pagan groups use ritual practises to generate their religious and personal identities within the modern Australian context? More specifically, research questions will address the following:

1. How do Pagan initiation rituals assist in the formation of personal identity in the modern Australian context?
2. What additional markers of identity are used to define the practitioner's Pagan identity?
3. In what ways does the creation of a new Pagan identity affect life priorities and values?

The methodological approach used in this research will be ethnographic and involve a three-stage, qualitative, mixed-methods approach. The three stages are surveys, interviews and observations for data collection, and thematic analysis. The research will be focused on Neo-Pagan groups in Queensland as a case study. By answering these questions this research may also add to the understanding of Neo-Paganism and religious identity in Australia and add to the scholarship on new religious movements in general.